

**The Role of the Blocked Mobility Hypothesis in
Explaining the Pathways to Entrepreneurship and the
Entrepreneurial Aspirations of Muslim Migrants in
Sydney, Australia.**

A thesis submitted for the PhD degree of business management

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CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I, Mohammad Alaslani declare that this thesis, is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of PhD, in the Business School at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise reference or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis. This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

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Abstract

Muslim immigrants experience much higher unemployment rates than other immigrants in Australia, twice the national average (Masanauskas 2012). Some argue that this high unemployment is a by-product of discrimination and prejudice (Lovatt, Mitchell, Nilan, Hosseini, Cook, Samarayi, & Mansfield 2011; Markus 2014). According to Collins (2003), formal or informal discrimination acts as an inhibitor that blocks labour market access and the social and economic mobility of immigrant minorities (including Muslim immigrants) or confines them to unacceptable jobs. As a result, migrants are drawn to the idea of establishing their own business. For many, self-employment may be the only viable option.

This thesis is located at the intersection between religion (Islam), entrepreneurship and migration theory. The aim of the study was to examine the nature of Muslim entrepreneurship in Sydney in order to understand its underlying dynamics and the significance of blocked mobility in Muslim immigrants' decision to establish a business in Australia. The project employed a mixed methods approach – a survey of 300 Muslim immigrant entrepreneurs and 15 in-depth interviews – to collect and analyse quantitative and qualitative data. The participants were from a wide range of national backgrounds and were involved in diverse business enterprises in Sydney, home to the largest number of Australian Muslim immigrants. The results provided a deeper understanding of the barriers facing Muslim immigrants who aspire to be entrepreneurs, the strategies that they use to overcome these barriers, and the economic and social contribution of Muslim immigrant entrepreneurs. It also explored the ways in which these businesses are embedded within family and Muslim community networks, and how religion impacts on immigrant entrepreneurship. The results have the potential to assist other researchers in the fields of socioeconomics and community management who investigate minority immigrant entrepreneurship. .

One key finding was that Muslim entrepreneurs in Sydney make a significant contribution to the Sydney economy and community. They have created significant employment for Muslims and non-Muslims through the introduction of innovative processes for new products. The fieldwork also demonstrated the extent to which the businesses of Muslim immigrant entrepreneurs are embedded in their families and community. Importantly, the

survey results showed that most of the Muslim immigrant entrepreneurs who took part did not report experiences of racial discrimination, and most did not experience unemployment in Australia. Moreover, many informants had individual or family experience of entrepreneurship prior to settling in Australia. Yet, for a small proportion of respondents (27%), their pathway to entrepreneurship was shaped by blocked mobility. The conclusion, then, is that Muslim migrants have a broad range of entrepreneurial drivers, which may be better understood by examining segments within the broader population.